Step 2: The teacher presents the new concept to the children:

Teacher: "How many apples are there?"

Pupils: "There are 2 + 2 + 2 = 6 apples."

Teacher: "Please identify the groups of 2."

There are three groups of 2. This can be expressed as:

- 3 X 2 = 6 or
- three times two = six

where "X" means multiplication.

Note: Multiplication is the same as repetitive addition.
The child must recognize that there are three equal groups of two and that together they equal six.

Step 3: Asks the children to practice the new skill of multiplying by 2

Multiply each of the following numbers by 2:

X	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
X	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20

Step 4: The teacher then asks the children to apply their new knowledge:

If one kg of potatoes costs 2 AFS, what will be the price of 8 kg of potatoes?
The children must answer that 8 X 2 = 16

Using the charts

The wall charts that accompany the student and teacher materials list the basic competencies that each child should achieve at each grade level in each subject. The charts should be hung on the wall to remind teachers and students in the relevant classes of their objectives and goals. The order of the objectives on the chart indicates the sequences in which the skills are best learned. Teachers can at any time refer to the chart to pose questions to the children to reinforce the skills they have learned previously.

III Concepts that May Need Explanation

Math:

Place Values: Place value means the value of a digit in its special position in a number.
Example: the value of 8 in 2182 is 80

Billions: In the Afghan context, the concept milliyards has been widely used to express billions. For consistency with the outside world, the concept billions has been adopted instead of milliyards.

Round Off: For many decimal numbers, a number is often expressed in its approximate value rather than its exact value. This is particularly for purposes in scientific research, where people need to use the approximate value of a number depending on the precision of the experiment.
Example: For a quantity of 2.53 kg potatoes, the digit 3 in the hundreth decimal place can be ignored so that the number is expressed as 2.5 kg. Similarly, a quantity of 2.58 potatoes will be approximately 2.6 kg.
However, for 2.53 kg of silver, the digit 3 must be kept so that the exact value of the number remains 2.53 kg.
This rule of approximation is called 'round off' in Math.

Back to School Programme
Orientation to Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) Materials
Suggestions for Trainers

Note to the trainer/facilitator:

Below is a plan for orienting teachers to the new Afghan Basic Competency materials. This orientation provides only the essentials a teacher needs for first use of the materials in a classroom. In-service teacher training in the future will expand on this initial orientation. At a minimum the orientation should take half a day.

Depending on the number of participants the trainer/facilitator may decide to use either a lecture or workshop format. The lecture format may be most suitable when a large number of participants are present. When fewer participants are present a workshop format can be used. In this case participants can be divided into groups and can practice using the ABC materials. When time permits, the orientation can be usefully expanded with more demonstrations of the lesson format and/or practice of the teaching steps and new concepts.

This orientation plan below suggests the steps that should be followed. For convenience, boxes have been provided with key points of each section. The facilitator can write these points on a flip chart or blackboard as a visual aid. More details on each point are provided in the handout, "Guidelines for the Use of Basic Competency Materials." Each participant in the orientation should receive a copy of the handout.

The facilitator should follow the steps below:

1. State the objective and parts of the orientation session:

- **What is the objective of the orientation?**

The objective of the orientation:

- To provide a brief orientation on the Basic Competencies of Learning (BCL) Framework and the new Afghan Basic Competencies (ABC) materials that will be used for Afghan students/teachers in primary grades 1 through 6 in math and languages (Dari and Pashto).

- **What will the orientation cover?**

The orientation will:

- Describe the BCL Framework and the ABC materials
- Show how ABC textbooks and charts can be used
- Explain some new concepts

2. Give a brief introduction to BCL and ABC covering the following points

(Refer to the information in "Guidelines for the Use of Basic Competency Materials" for more details):

- **What is the Basic Competencies of Learning (BCL) Framework?**

A Basic Competencies of Learning Framework:

- Defines the skills/knowledge students should achieve at specific grades or levels of education.
- Guides the development of instructional materials, supervisory practices, and training programs.
- Allows educators to ascertain that children learn what is expected.
- Allows educators to ensure that all children receive the same quality of education
- Ensures children acquire the skills upon which all other learning takes place.

- **What are the Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) Materials?**

The Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) Materials

- Afghan Basic Competencies (ABC) are instructional materials for pupils and teachers based on the BCL framework.
- These materials cover two core subjects—math and language (Dari and Pashto)-- for grades 1 through 6.
- The ABC materials consist of student books, teacher guides (with answer keys), and charts listing learning objectives for each class level.

- **What are the general features of the ABC materials?**

Features of the ABC materials

- Each lesson has steps to teach a specific skill in language or math
- These steps provide an easy-to-follow lesson plan for the teacher
- The same format of steps is used for each lesson
- The child learns skills in a sequence that moves from the simple to the complex
- The content is appropriate in subject and language to a child's evolving level of understanding
- The content promotes the religious and cultural values of Afghan society
- The lessons keep a clear focus on children's learning

- **How do supervision, assessment, and evaluation relate to BCL/ABC?**

Supervision, assessment and evaluation

- Supervision, assessment and evaluation ensure children achieve learning outcomes.
- Supervisors ask children competency-based questions to determine whether they have learned the competencies.
- Results help the supervisor decide what kind of support to provide pupils/ teachers.
- Teachers use competency-based questions daily to monitor children's learning.
- Teachers' performance is evaluated on how well children achieve learning competencies.

3. Explain how teachers should use the ABC learning materials

- **Describe the lesson format in the ABC materials**

Lesson format/plan in ABC books for math and languages

- Each lesson in the ABC student books is organized around a set of steps.
- The pattern helps teachers make sure children understand the new concepts and skills and use them independently
- There is no need to prepare lesson plans since these are already part of the lesson in the book.
- The teachers' guide explains the steps of the lesson format in more detail and provides the answers to practice exercises in the children's book.

- **Give an example of the ABC steps the teacher would follow in a language class.**

In **language class**, a teacher:

- States the objective of the lesson
- Has children read a passage in their books and demonstrate their comprehension of the main idea
- Ensures children understand the elements of the passage (vocabulary, grammar, spelling and writing)
- Determines that the children have absorbed the content relevant to improving the quality of their own lives and the development of Afghan society

Note: Language examples appear in the Dari and Pashto versions of the orientation.

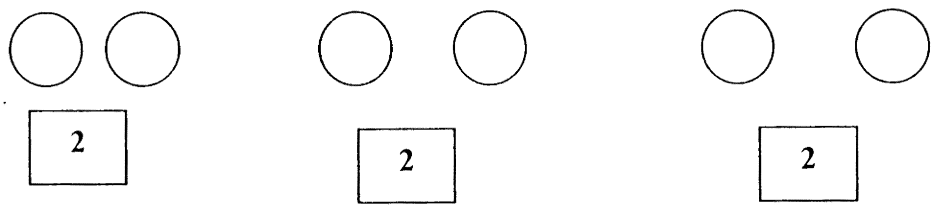
- **Give an example of the ABC steps a teacher would follow in a mathematics class.**

In **math class**, a teacher:

- States the objective of the lesson (learning a new skill or concept, or review of previous work)
- Presents the new concept or demonstrates a skill, and by asking questions ensures that children understand and can use it
- Asks children to complete practice exercises
- Gives children problems to apply their new knowledge

Multiplication example:

Step 1: The teacher states the objective: learning to multiply by 2



Step 2: The teacher presents the new concept to the children:

Teacher: "How many apples are there?"

Pupils: "There are 2 + 2 + 2 = 6 apples."

Teacher: "Please identify the groups of 2."

There are three groups of 2. This can be expressed as:

- 3 X 2 = 6 or
- three times two = six

where "X" means multiplication.

Note: Multiplication is the same as repetitive addition.
The child must recognize that there are three equal groups of two and that together they equal six.

Step 3: Asks the children to practice the new skill of multiplying by 2

Multiply each of the following numbers by 2:

X	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
X	**2**	**4**	**6**	**8**	**10**	**12**	**14**	**16**	**18**	**20**

Step 4: The teacher then asks the children to apply their new knowledge:

If one kg of potatoes costs 2 AFS, what will be the price of 8 kg of potatoes?
The children must answer that 8 X 2 = 16

- **Describe how to use the ABC charts**

ABC wall charts

- The wall charts list the basic competencies that each child should achieve at each grade level in each subject.
- The charts should be hung on the wall to remind teachers and students of their objectives and goals.
- The order of the objectives on the chart indicates the sequences in which the skills are best learned
- A teacher at any time can use the wall charts to ask questions about previously learned competencies.

4. Concepts that May Need Explanation

- **Explain the following concepts that may be new to teachers**

New Math Concepts:

Place Value: Place value means the value of a digit in its special position in a number.
Example: the value of 8 in 2182 is 80

Billions: In the Afghan context, the concept milliyards has been widely used to express billions. For consistency with the outside world, the concept billions has been adopted instead of milliyards.

Round Off: A decimal number may be expressed in its approximate value rather than its exact value. This is particularly the case in scientific research, where people need to use an approximate value of a number instead of the precise number.

Example: For a quantity of 2.53 kg potatoes, the digit 3 in the hundreth decimal place can be ignored so that the number is expressed as 2.5 kg. Similarly, a quantity of 2.58 potatoes will be closer to 2.6 kg. so it is "rounded off" to that number.
However, for 2.53 kg of silver, the digit 3 must be kept so that the exact value of the number remains 2.53 kg.
This rule of approximation is called 'round off' in Math.

Note: Examples of difficult concepts in languages appear in the Dari and Pashto versions of the orientation.

Back to School Programme
Guidelines for the Use of the Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) Materials

Historically the education sector has been neglected in Afghanistan and the last few decades have only served to plunge the sector into deepening crisis. In 1999, more than 60 Afghan educators representing 24 organizations supported by UNICEF and Save the Children/US took the initiative to improve the quality of the primary program and address other serious deficiencies. Their intent was to standardize and unify the educational experience of Afghans by developing a framework for the learning outcomes expected of all children. At the same time, the aim was to produce high quality instructional materials that would be appropriate in the many diverse settings of the country. To improve equity and reduce differences in access to educational opportunities, the new program needed to be easily transported to any location where a teacher and students might need it—in formal schools, home schools, community schools, central towns or remote villages. The program should be easy to use and produce consistent results independent of the diverse background of teachers and students.

The Basic Competencies approach that resulted from this effort was developed in the general context of the world-wide Education For All (EFA) initiative, and growing international attention to the linkages between equity, access and the quality of education. The approach is one that is used in many developing countries. By focusing on learning achievements as the overarching goal, the approach provides an important means to neutralize differences in quality by promoting standardization and uniformity in the education system.

I. New Teaching/Learning Materials for Teachers and Students

The Back to School Program launched at the beginning of the school year in March 2002 provides all teachers and students in Afghanistan with new teaching/learning materials based on a Basic Competencies of Learning (BCL) framework. These new materials were developed over the last few years by Afghan educators specifically for the children of Afghanistan. This handout answers some common questions about BCL and the new Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) materials for teachers and students.

What is a Basic Competencies of Learning (BCL) framework?

The BCL forms a framework that defines the skills and knowledge students should achieve at specific grades or levels of education. The intent of the framework is to focus all components of the education system -- instructional materials, teaching, training, supervision, assessment, and management -- on children's learning.

BCL is a tool that can be used for a variety of purposes. It provides an important guide for the development of instructional materials, supervisory practices, assessment tools and training programs. By defining learning expectations, BCL allows educators to measure and determine whether children have acquired expected learning skills. Consequently it is possible to know whether children in all learning environments—

urban, rural, home schools, community schools, formal or nonformal schools--receive the same quality of education. At the same time achievement of basic competencies in language and math provides the foundation from which all other learning takes place.

What are the Afghan Basic Competency (ABC) Materials?

The BCL framework has been translated into a set of core learning materials called the Afghan Basic Competencies (ABC). These materials cover two subjects—math and language (Dari and Pashto)-- for grades 1 through 6. In addition to teaching the competencies, the materials provide basic life skills knowledge that is intended to help children become responsible and productive members of society. The ABC materials consist of student books, teacher guides (with answer keys), and charts of specific learning objectives for each class level.

General features of the ABC materials

The ABC materials are carefully designed for maximum learning. Some of their most important features include:

- Each lesson consists of steps to teach a specific skill in language or math
- These steps constitute an easy to follow lesson plan that is consistent in format throughout the materials
- The child learns skills in a sequence that moves from the simple to the complex
- The content is developmentally appropriate in terms of subject and language
- Each learning step builds on the previous level
- The content promotes the religious and cultural values of Afghan society
- The lessons keep a clear focus on children's learning

Supervision, assessment and evaluation

Supervision, assessment and evaluation are important in ensuring that learning outcomes are achieved by students. The supervisor visits classes periodically and by posing competency-based questions determines whether children are acquiring the competencies. The results make it possible for the supervisor to determine where students are strong and where they are weak and where teachers need more support to help their students achieve the expected competencies. Teachers may also use simple informal competency-based questions to know on a daily basis whether children are learning. If there are areas of weakness the teacher needs to provide children with more practice and/or review. Teachers' performance in the end will be evaluated in terms of their ability to ensure that all children master the important competencies.

II. How to Use the Materials

Using the lesson format

Each lesson in the ABC student books is organized around a set of steps. The pattern helps teachers ensure that children achieve the expected competencies and can use their newly acquired skills. Once a teacher becomes familiar with this pattern, teaching becomes easier. There is no need to prepare lesson plans since these are already part of the lesson in the book. The teachers' guide explains the steps of the lesson format in more detail and provides the answers to exercises in the children's book.

For example, in **language class,** the teacher would:

- State the objective of the lesson
- Have children read a passage in their books and demonstrate that they have comprehended the main idea
- Ensure children understand the elements of the passage (vocabulary, grammar, spelling and writing)
- Determine that the children have absorbed the content relevant to improving the quality of their own lives and the development of Afghan society

Note: Language examples appear in the Dari and Pashto versions of the orientation.

For example in **math class**, a teacher would follow these steps:

- State the objective of the lesson (new skill or concept or review of previous work)
- Present the new concept or demonstrate a new skill, and by asking questions ensure that children understand and can use it
- Ask children to complete practice exercises and apply their new knowledge

Multiplication example:

Step 1: The teacher states the objective: learning to multiply by 2

